

R 110409Z AUG 08  
FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0120  
INFO AMEMBASSY ASTANA  
AMEMBASSY BISHKEK  
AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE  
AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC

UNCLAS TASHKENT 000922

DEPARTMENT FOR INL/AE (BUHLER) AND EUR/ACE  
DEPT OF JUSTICE FOR ICITAP MARK MOGLE  
ASTANA FOR INL ANTHONY BEAVER

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SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN FORENSIC LAB EXPERTS VISIT USA

11. (U) SUMMARY: The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), with the support of the Department of Justice Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP), arranged for the participation of Uzbek forensic experts in the 18th International Association of Forensic Sciences (IAFS) Triennial Meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana. They then visited the Harris County Forensic Laboratory in Houston, Texas, where they observed quality assurance techniques at a modern American facility. This training opportunity complements ongoing INL-funded equipment upgrades at the laboratory in Tashkent and will significantly assist its efforts to gain international accreditation and enhance the professional development of Uzbek laboratory staff. End summary.

#### INL Forensic Laboratory Project

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12. (U) The Main Forensic Laboratory of the Ministry of Health is an important resource supporting criminal investigations in Uzbekistan. INL is in the midst of a multi-year laboratory improvement project administered by the U.S. DOJ ICITAP. As part of the laboratory improvement project, Embassy Tashkent and ICITAP arranged participation of Uzbek forensic experts in the 18th International Association of Forensic Sciences (IAFS) Triennial Meeting held in New Orleans, Louisiana on July 21-25. It was the first time forensics officials from Uzbekistan participated in a professional forum of such importance. During the world triennial meeting Uzbek officials met not only with colleagues from the United States, but also from Kazakhstan, Columbia, Russia, Turkey, Portugal, and the United Arab Emirates.

13. (U) The workshops on the first day covered International Accreditation Standards, giving Uzbek officials a better appreciation of ISO accreditation process, something they had no exposure to in the past despite setting it as a long-term goal.

14. (U) Workshops on the subsequent days covered Forensic Laboratory planning and design. This lecture was reinforced by a side meeting with a laboratory design firm later in the week. Both the workshop and the private meeting gave the Uzbek group significant insights into areas they had not been previously trained in. This was particularly useful since Uzbekistan is in the process of designing and constructing a new laboratory building, and a DOJ official at the conference stressed the importance that the Uzbeks get the design right at the outset.

15. (U) Significantly, the Uzbek participants heard several lectures on human rights, torture, and genocide, which helped reinforce the important role the forensic experts play in the criminal justice system. A presenter from the University of Istanbul even touched on Abu Ghraib, which surprised the Uzbek attendees. Speakers also discussed detailed investigations of mass disaster cases, death in

custody cases, and sensitive investigations involving government and paramilitary groups. Uzbek officials were introduced to the field of forensic nursing as well.

¶6. (U) At the conclusion of the conference, the forensic experts flew to Houston to visit the Harris County Forensic Laboratory. Deputy Chief of the Forensic Laboratory Dr. Ashraf Mozayani personally demonstrated existing forensic laboratory and quality assurance programs. Mozayani was able to easily relate to the Uzbek guests because she had personally conducted INL-sponsored training in Uzbekistan on multiple occasions.

¶7. (U) During a busy two-day schedule in Houston, the Uzbek forensic experts visited many different departments, including DNA and Serology, Biology, Toxicology, Anthropology, Morgue, Controlled Substance, Trace Evidence and Investigation. They also participated in discussions about management, budgeting, and justification of equipment, labor, and other resources.

¶8. (U) The Uzbek experts noted that their Harris County Forensic Laboratory visit gave them a superb practical view of the material covered in the IAFS lectures from the week before. Embassy Tashkent has already been invited to watch a presentation by the chief of the Uzbek Forensic Bureau that sums up the results of the trip for those laboratory personnel who could not visit the United States.

RESULTS:  
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¶9. (U) Uzbek officials recommended that forensic experts throughout the region should participate in similar planning, design, and accreditation presentations. Some of the lessons they took away from their visit included the following:

- a. The need in larger laboratories to establish a Director of Operations position. Such a professional would manage administrative, financial, business and operations activities, allowing the scientific experts to focus on what they do best.
- b. The importance for forensic laboratories in the former Soviet Union to learn about the possible addition of disciplines that cover Forensic Nursing and Forensic Investigation.
- c. The critical need for full-time Quality Manager positions in laboratories to coordinate efforts to meet international standards.
- d. The usefulness of exchange programs between U.S. and Uzbek experts from similar forensic facilities. The practical view of day-to-day forensic operations proved to be a huge benefit for the Uzbek experts, and they believe that a continuation of these programs will only make them more successful.

COMMENT:  
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¶10. (U) We hope that exchange programs such as these will contribute to the Uzbekistan Main Forensic Laboratory's long-term goal of obtaining international accreditation. The visit already paid dividends in enhancing the professional skills of the laboratory staff, which adds value to the donations of sophisticated equipment made under the auspices of the ongoing INL project. A modern, accredited forensic laboratory facility in Uzbekistan will greatly enhance the validity of evidence analysis in criminal investigation and further the cause of judicial reform in the country.

BUTCHER